

S/N 09/844,965

Amendment dated February 24, 2006

Reply to Office Action of December 2, 2005

REMARKS

Applicants have received and reviewed a final Office Action dated December 2, 2005.

By way of response, Applicants have amended claims 1, 31, 42, 55, 67, 76 and canceled without prejudice claims 26-28, 30, 50-54, 57, 63-66, 69, and 77-83. Claims 1, 5, 6, 8-12, 14, 18-25, 29, 31-33, 36-47, 55-60, 67, 68, 70-72, 75, and 76 are pending. No new matter is added. Applicants submit that the pending claims are supported by the specification.

For the reasons given below, Applicants submit that the amended claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Claim Amendments

Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite a system for washing, disinfecting, or sterilizing a "medical or dental instrument or device" that includes "diagnostic instruments, trays, pans, holders, racks, forceps, scissors, shears, saws (e.g. bone saws and their blades), hemostats, knives, chisels, rongeurs, files, nippers, drills, drill bits, rasps, burrs, spreaders, breakers, elevators, clamps, needle holders, carriers, clips, hooks, gouges, curettes, retractors, straightener, punches, extractors, scoops, keratomes, spatulas, expressors, trocars, dilators, cages, glassware, tubing, catheters, cannulas, plugs, stents, endoscopes (e.g., noninvasive flexible and rigid fiber optic endoscopes), endotracheal tubes, anesthesia breathing circuits, cytosopes, arthoscopes and related equipment, and the like, or combinations thereof." This amendment finds support in the specification at least at page 2, lines 6-7, and page 6, lines 15-22.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite "at least a first station configured to house the object." This amendment finds support in the specification at least at page 3, lines 13-14.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite a sonicator comprising an irrigated probe that is "movable for manual sonic cleaning of dirty objects." This amendment finds support in the specification at least at page 7, lines 25-26.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite an "emitter adapted and configured to impact the object with light or microwave energy either during or after circulating the antimicrobial composition." This amendment finds support in the specification at least at page 8, lines 20-23, and claim 30 as originally filed.

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Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite a sterilant system comprising "an injector configured to add sterilant comprising chlorine dioxide; the injector comprising pressure release valve configured to release at the station gaseous sterilant from pressurized vessel; and vent adapted and configured to evacuate sterilant gas from the station." This amendment finds support in claims 26-28 as originally filed.

Applicants have amended claims 31, 42, 55, 67 and 76 to recite a station "comprising holder, sonicator, liquid transmitter, sterilant system, emitter, dryer, or a combination thereof." These amendments find support in the specification and the claims as originally filed.

Applicants respectfully argue amended claims 1, 31, 42, 55, 67, and 76, and their dependents, are in condition for allowance, and notification to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1, 5-6, 8-12, 14, 18-25, 29, 31-33, 36-40, 42-43 and 45-47, 50-56, 58-60, 63-68, 70-72 and 75 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Moyers, Oakcs et al., and Hohmann et al. (US Patent No. 4,710,233). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to independent claim 1 overcome this rejection. The Office Action did not reject claim 30 with respect to these references. The amendments to claim 1 incorporate the recitations of claim 30. Thus, because the references cited were not applied to claim 30, the amendment to claim 1 incorporating its recitations is also allowable over these references.

Moreover, independent claims 1, 31, 42, 55, 67, and 76 have been amended to recite several additional stations, including a holder, sonicator, liquid transmitter, sterilant system, emitter, dryer, or a combination thereof. In addition, independent claim 1 has been amended to recite a system for washing, disinfecting, or sterilizing various medical or dental instruments or devices. The cited references fail to teach or suggest these recitations.

Accordingly, based on the foregoing differences, Applicants respectfully submit that these references neither teach nor suggest the presently claimed invention and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

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The Examiner rejected claims 26-28, 41, 44, 57, 69, 76-83 under U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Moyers, Oakes et al. and Hohmann et al., as applied above, and further in view of GB 947,700 and either Rosenblatt et al., or Jefferis, III et al. The Examiner rejected claim 30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Moyers, Oakes et al. and Hohmann et al., together with GB 947,700 and either Rosenblatt et al., or Jefferis, III et al., as applied above, and further in view of GB 2,040,150 A, Aussenac. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to independent claims 1, 31, 42, 55, 67, and 76 overcome these rejections. These claims have been amended to recite several additional stations, including a holder, sonicator, liquid transmitter, sterilant system, emitter, dryer, or a combination thereof. In addition, independent claim 1 has been amended to recite a system for washing, disinfecting, or sterilizing various medical or dental instruments or devices. The cited references fail to teach or suggest these recitations.

Accordingly, based on the foregoing differences, Applicants respectfully submit that those references neither teach nor suggest the presently claimed invention and withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

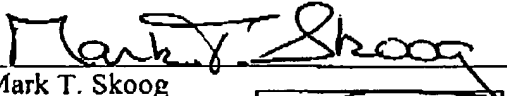
SUMMARY

In view of the above, Applicant contends the claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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